

## THE HUNGARIAN HIGHER EDUCATION SYSTEM<sup>1</sup>

Within the framework of the Bologna Process the gradual transition from a pre-Bologna higher education system resulting in *Egyetemi oklevél* (university-level degree) or *Főiskolai oklevél* (college-level degree) to a higher education system based on three consecutive cycles started in 2004 in Hungary. At present pre-Bologna and Bologna-type programmes run parallel.

This description presents the higher education system existing before the introduction of the Bologna-type training, and was prepared for diplomas awarded within the pre-Bologna system.<sup>2</sup>

### Admission requirements for higher education

According to the Higher Education Act No. 80 of 1993, the basic requirement for admission to college (non-university higher education institution) and university graduate education is the Hungarian secondary school leaving certificate (*Érettségi bizonyítvány*), or a foreign equivalent, or a degree obtained in higher education. The secondary school leaving certificate is conferred after eight years of primary education followed by four years of secondary education in a comprehensive/academic secondary school (*gimnázium*) or vocational secondary school (*szakközépiskola*). It must be noted that the division of the twelve years of study may vary: it may also be divided into 4 or 6 years of primary education and 8 or 6 years of secondary education.

Admission to higher education institutions - with some exceptions - is based on the applicants' secondary school achievements and on the results of the competitive entrance examinations.

### Higher education institutions

The Hungarian higher education has a dual system consisting of universities (*egyetem*) and colleges (*főiskola*). Universities are such higher education institutions that are able to organise courses in more than one field of science and within a field of science in several branches; carry out scientific research activity and have accredited PhD/DLA courses. Colleges organise more than one training course in a branch of science or in a field of the arts. Hungarian higher education institutions are autonomous, state or non-state institutions recognised by the state. The appendix of the Higher Education Act No. 80 of 1993 lists all recognised higher education institutions ([www.naric.hu](http://www.naric.hu)).

### Accreditation and quality assurance

The Hungarian Accreditation Committee established in 1993 is responsible for accrediting and evaluating the quality of teaching and research at higher education institutions. It assesses the standard of education and research in each higher education institution at least in every eight years (institutional accreditation) based on a detailed self-assessment of the institution and the report of a visiting committee. The Hungarian Accreditation Committee also examines the curricula, the qualification requirements as well as the quality of the academic staff and the teaching facilities (programme accreditation).

### Degrees and qualifications

Hungarian universities and colleges grant degrees following a binary pattern. Colleges and universities grant "*Főiskolai oklevél*" (college-level degree) and universities award "*Egyetemi oklevél*" (university-level degree). The duration of training at college level requires minimum 3 years and maximum 4 years of studies, while the length of study at university level is minimum 4 years, maximum 5 years (one of the few exceptions is the medical course where the duration of education is 6 years). Students complete their education with a final examination consisting of the preparation and defence of a

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<sup>1</sup> Amended on 9<sup>th</sup> November 2004.

<sup>2</sup> The text framed was added on 12<sup>th</sup> February 2008.

dissertation, oral and/or written examinations prescribed in the qualification requirements and - in certain programmes - the performance of practical work.

Beyond university and college graduate education, 2 types of post-graduate programmes are offered by higher education institutions. First, further specialisation degrees can be awarded after college or university graduation. These further specialisation programmes lead to new qualifications. Studies may vary from one to three years' duration.

Secondly, universities provide training leading to a doctoral degree, which is the only scientific degree available in Hungary at present. The condition for applying for doctoral training is a Hungarian university degree or its foreign equivalent. Higher education institutions link admission to entrance examinations and often to additional criteria (e.g. professional experience). The duration of the training is at least 3 years, at the end of which a doctor of philosophy (PhD - *doktori fokozat*) or a doctor of liberal arts (DLA - *mester fokozat*) degree is conferred depending on the field of science.

### **Credit system**

The obligatory use of the ECTS compatible credit system was introduced in September 2003, but several higher education institutions have already been using it since the middle of the 1990's. According to the governmental decree on the introduction of the credit system one credit corresponds to 30 hours student workload. The minimum number of credits for a college-level degree is 180, for a university-level degree is 240, for a further specialisation degree is 60 while for the doctoral degree it is 180.

### **System of assessment**

The assessment of knowledge may occur, generally in five grades: excellent (5), good (4), satisfactory (3), pass (2), and fail (1) or with the classification: excellent (5), satisfactory (3), fail (1).

### **Academic year**

In general, the academic year of higher education institutions consists of two semesters, namely the autumn and the spring semesters. The autumn semester lasts generally from the beginning of September until the end of January. The spring semester lasts from the beginning of February until the end of June. In general, both semesters include a 15-week period for lectures, seminars and practical work and a 6-week examinations period.